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BOOK DEPARTMENT.

CONDUCTED BY PRINCIPAL C. H. THURBER.

Abraham Lincoln. The True Story of a Great Life. By WILLIAM H. HERNDON and JESSE W. WEIK. With an Introduction by HORACE WHITE. New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1892. 2 vols. pp. xxviii, 331; vii, 348.

The principal contributor to these volumes, Mr. Herndon, became Lincoln's law partner in 1843; and the partnership continued (without one word of "personal controversy or disagreement"—I, 252) till the assassination of the President in 1865. Mr. Herndon had, therefore, unusual facilities for observing Lincoln; and as he from the first believed in the great destiny of the man whom he also loved and revered, he became the personal depository of a great mass of invaluable *Lincolniana*. From this material he has at last undertaken to portray the man Lincoln, and to analyze his attributes and characteristics. He has set down the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth;—at least as he saw the truth. The result is a biography which, if the Hibernicism may be allowed, would have delighted Lincoln himself.

Mr. Herndon's biography has the note of absolute veracity. We have new illustrations of the kindness, gentleness, justice, courage, and unflinching fidelity to principle which formed the groundwork of Lincoln's moral constitution. But, still more welcome, are the living pictures we get of Lincoln's life in his family and at his desk, on the circuit and in political campaigns. For the first time the world is here given the sad story of Lincoln's domestic life, and with the utmost impartiality. Another novelty is the portrayal of Lincoln's "inordinate ambition" (I, 191 and II, 44) and the dissipation of the popular myth, mostly of *post-bellum* growth, that he sat quietly at his legal work till the people called him to office. On the contrary, he is shown to have been "the smartest parliamentarian and cunningest log-roller." He believed in his own destiny and was always on the alert to bring it about.

Another merit of the book is that it keeps Lincoln always in sight. Of Masson's *Life of Milton* in six ponderous volumes, Lowell complained that it made the great poet an incident in his own biography. Readers of Nicolay and Hay's *Life of Lincoln* have been oppressed with the same feeling. Mr. Herndon leaves it to others to write a history of the times of Lin-

coln. He essays a portraiture of the man himself. And in the closeness with which he sticks to him, and the pertinacity with which he makes him reveal himself through his own oral and written speech, his work reminds one of Boswell's Life of Johnson. He has written a book which is destined to have a long life.

The book is invaluable for a school library. But just because it is such a literal translation from life, there are parts of it, especially the stories, which are not suitable for the young. It is pre-eminently a book for men and women, for teachers, not for pupils. Those who teach American history will find it as indispensable for their work as it is fresh, fascinating, and life-like in itself. There is a good deal of talk just now of teaching morals in the schools. But morality is a subject to be studied; it is a mode of life to be attained. And for the attainment of it nothing is more helpful than example. What moral help, therefore, a good teacher might draw from this book! For it was by his fidelity to principle that Lincoln triumphed over his greatest rival—Douglas—who possessed every other quality requisite for success and favor. Or, to take another example, what other words plead so powerfully the cause of Civil Service Reform as those of the great President whose noble work was always hampered by the thronging of office seekers. "This human struggle and scramble for office," he said, "for a way to live without work, will finally test the strength of our institutions" (II. 217).

J. G. Schurman.

The Beginner's Greek Book. By JOHN WILLIAMS WHITE, Ph. D., Professor of Greek in Harvard University. Boston: Ginn & Co. 1892. pp. XV, 428, 70.

Professor White's *First Lessons in Greek* has been extensively used since 1876. To those acquainted with it, the first point of interest in this new book will be to see how many changes have been made, as it may be supposed that these have been suggested by the experience of teachers. The author says—preface, page 1—"This book differs in important particulars, but not essentially in its plan, from my *First Lessons in Greek*. The two books make about equal demands upon the pupil during the first six months of his study. The increased size of the book is due mainly to the fact that it is complete in itself, and contains the text of the first eight chapters of Xenophon's *Anabasis*, with summaries of contents and notes, arranged as reading lessons." A question of method is then raised at the start in considering the plan of the book, and it is this. Shall the beginner be given a small book with constant reference to a standard grammar for the forms of the language and the rules for their use, and with just enough exercises to illustrate them, and then at the first possible moment be given an easy text to read; or shall he be given a book like this